Fantasy and Spectacle in Paris

Lecture 8 | Music in the Classical and Romantic Eras MCGY2612

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Andreas Geiger, *A Concert in the Year 1846!*
Source: Albert Ausoni, *Music in Art*, trans. Stephen Sartarelli (Los Angeles: The John Paul Getty Museum, 2009): 223

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

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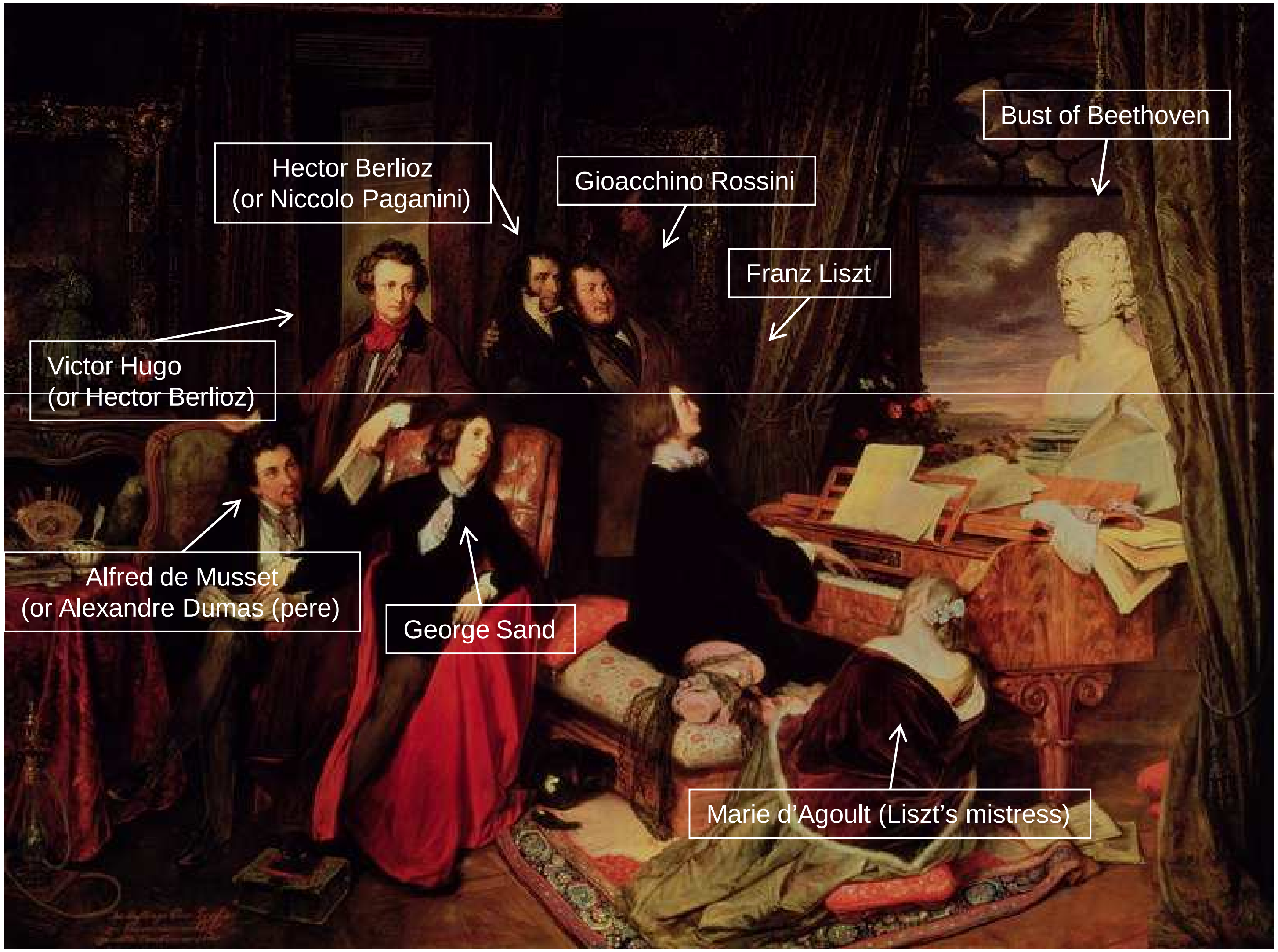
THE PARISIAN SALON



Josef Danhauser, *Franz Liszt Fantasizing at the Piano* (1840)

BEETHOVEN VS ROSSINI

- Ralph Kiesewetter (1834), *Geschichte der europäisch-abendländischen oder unserer heutigen Musik* (1834)
  - 1800-1832: ‘Age of Beethoven and Rossini’
- Popularised by Dahlhaus as the ‘twin styles’
- Beethoven: instrumental music; strong concept of art; work as a text for interpretation; popular with cognoscenti, gradually more widespread
- Rossini: vocal music; oblivious to strong concept of art; compositions as recipes for performance; overwhelming popularity, gradually fell off
  - Beethoven: artist vs Rossini: entertainer ??

STENDHAL, *LIFE OF ROSSINI*

Objections to ‘Northern’ dismissals of Rossini

Yet, in connection with Rossini, I could sincerely wish that the cold North would undertake some serious reflection, and acquire, perhaps, a deeper critical awareness of itself on the one hand, and of Rossini on the other, of his gaiety and of his musical ability. Certain northern critics have seen fit to accuse some of Rossini’s numbers of being ‘too frivolous’ (409)

Anti-instrumental music, pro-vocal music

› ‘the subtler *nuances* of emotion [...] can be expressed by the *human voice alone*, which treats them (in part at least) as a matter of spontaneous improvisation in immediate response to a *direct relationship with the audience*; [...] these same *nuances*, these delicately-shaded variations of the spirit, and nothing else, which constitute the essential miracle of music. [...] Instrumental music rarely stirs so much as a tremor in the deeper recesses of the human soul, and seldom moves to tears; [...] An Ice-cold heart, backed by a neat, methodical brain, and reinforced by an overdose of solid Teutonic perseverance, can master the piano a hundred times more successfully than could a mere *dilettante* like Pergolesi, for all his divine inspiration. (‘Of a certain talent which will be out of date by 1840’: 345)

Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, translated by Richard Coe (London: Calder, 1985)

STENDHAL, *LIFE OF ROSSINI*

Anti-German, pro-Italian

- ‘Who can guess what this noble composer [Cherubini, another Italian opera composer in Paris, director of the Conservatoire] *might* have achieved, if the growing influence of German music had not quenched the last spark of love in his soul, or rather, if it had not banished the last shred of feeling which he still retained for the melody of his native land.’ (408)

Rossini = easy listening… unlike Mozart

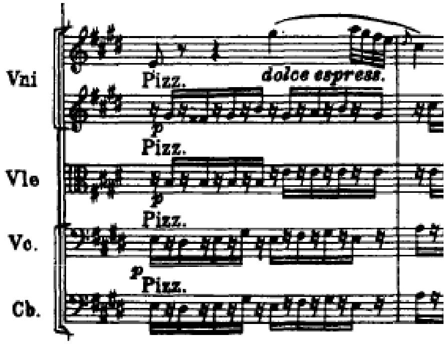
- After four uninterrupted acts of *le Nozze di Figaro*, there is not a single member of the audience who is not sick with head-ache and sheer exhaustion, and an experience of this devastating character is sufficient to put one off music altogether for a week; but such cantankerous and unkind thoughts never enter one’s head for an instant after listening to the two uninterrupted acts of *Tancredi* or *Elisabetta*. Rossini’s music, which is perpetually slithering over the brink into the echoing abyss of concert-platform virtuosity, is ideally suited to this brilliant arrangement devised by the Parisian theatre for its long-suffering public (407)

Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, translated by Richard Coe (London: Calder, 1985)

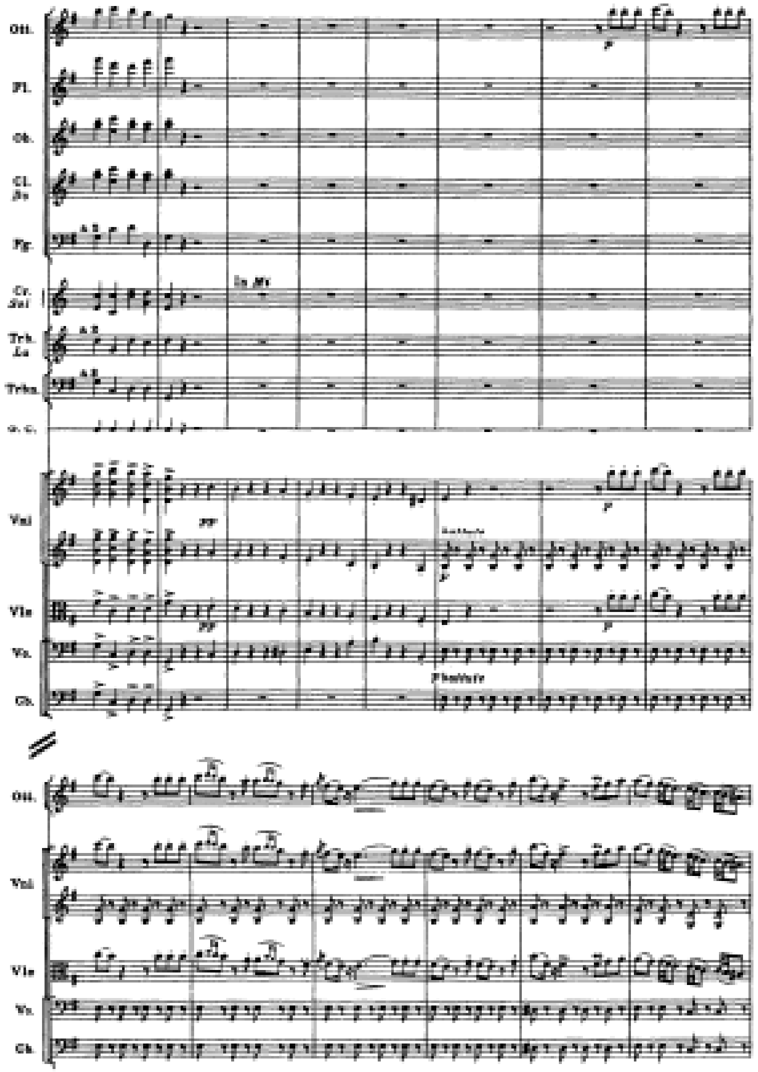
ROSSINI, *BARBIERE*: SINFONIA (=OVERTURE)

Overture layout

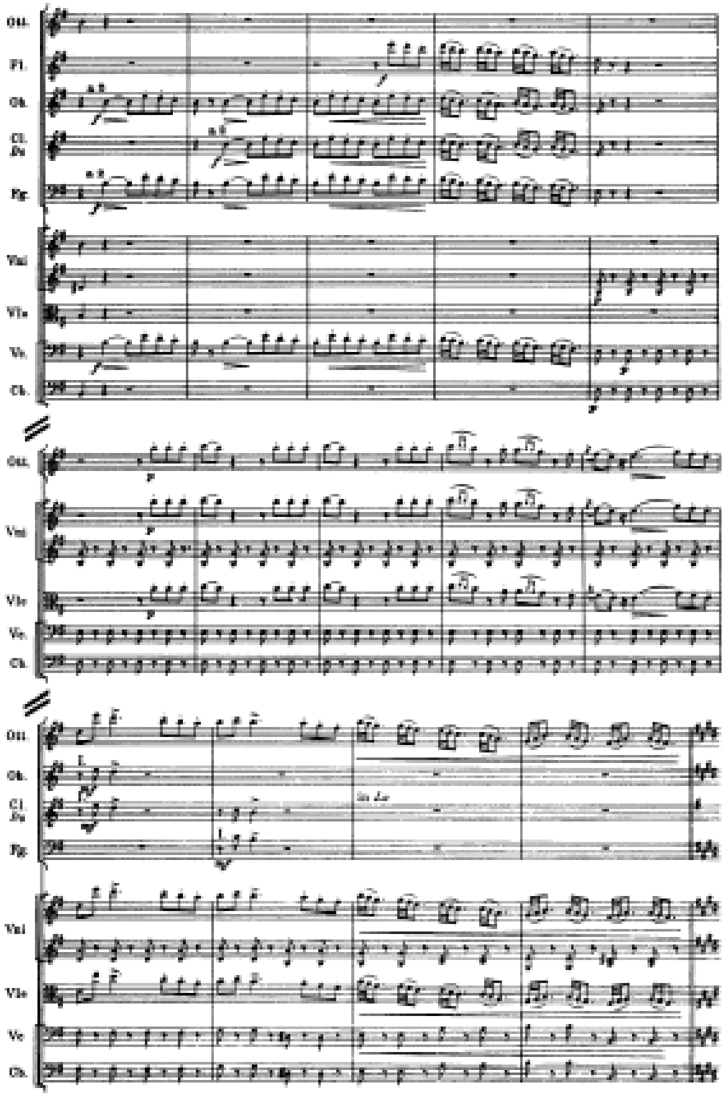
- Andante maestoso (Introduction)

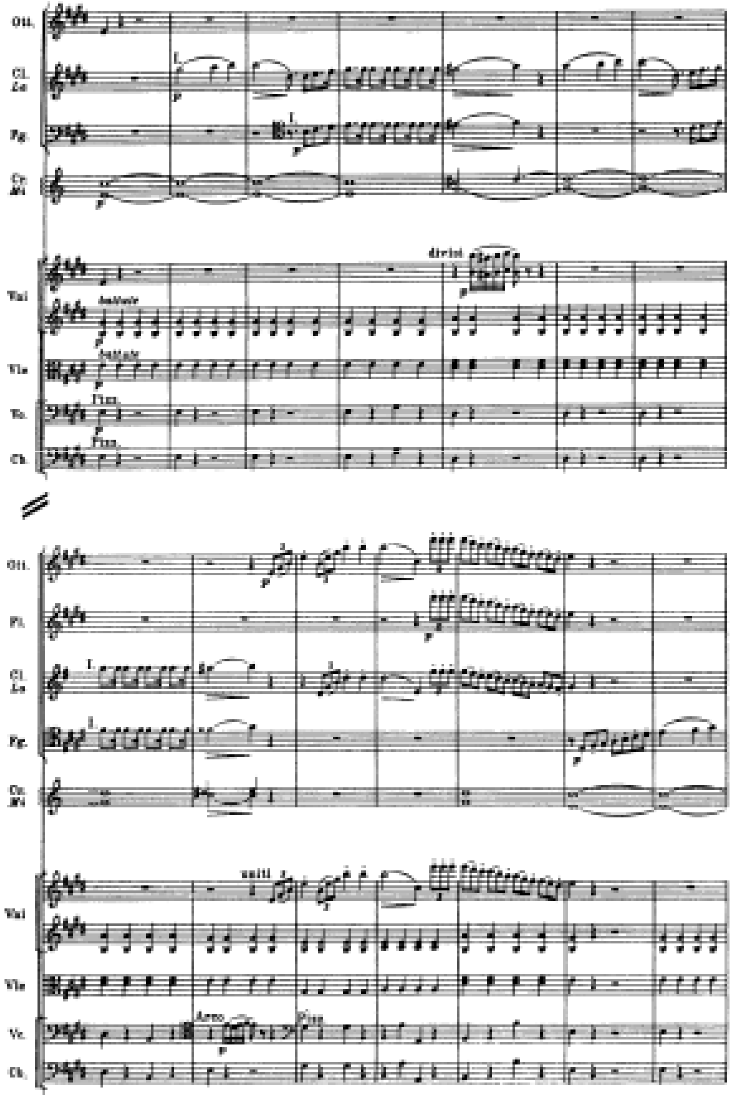


  - ends on V of e
- Allegro vivo
  - P: E minor theme, *pp* (i)
  - TR: *ff* arp based (->V of III)
  - S: G major theme (III)
  - 4-bar RT (=retransition)
  - P: E minor (i)
  - S: E major (I)
- Piu mosso: Coda (I)

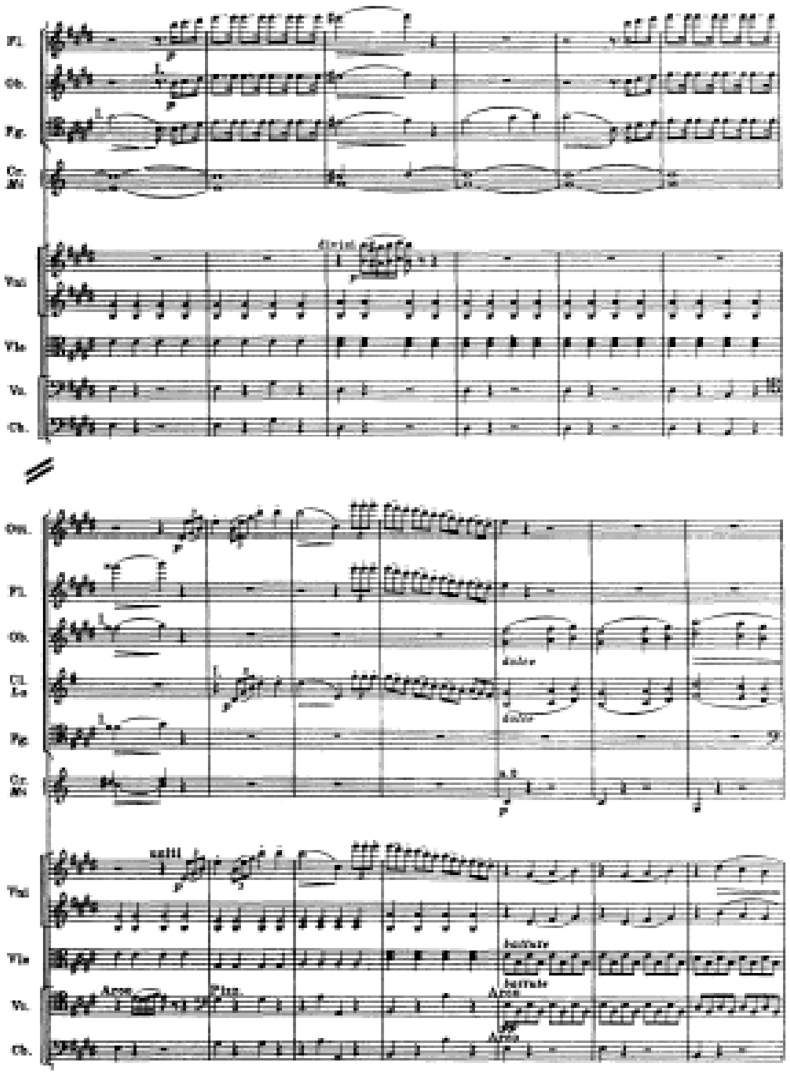


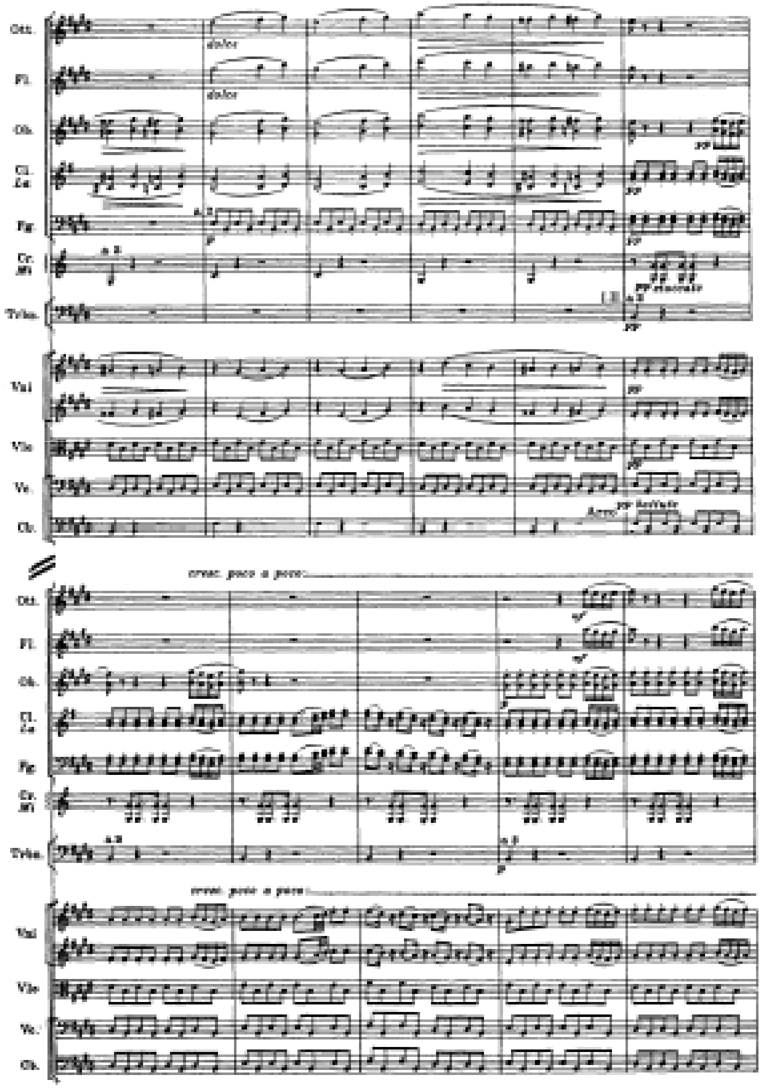
ROSSINI, *BARBIERE*: OVERTURE [2/5]



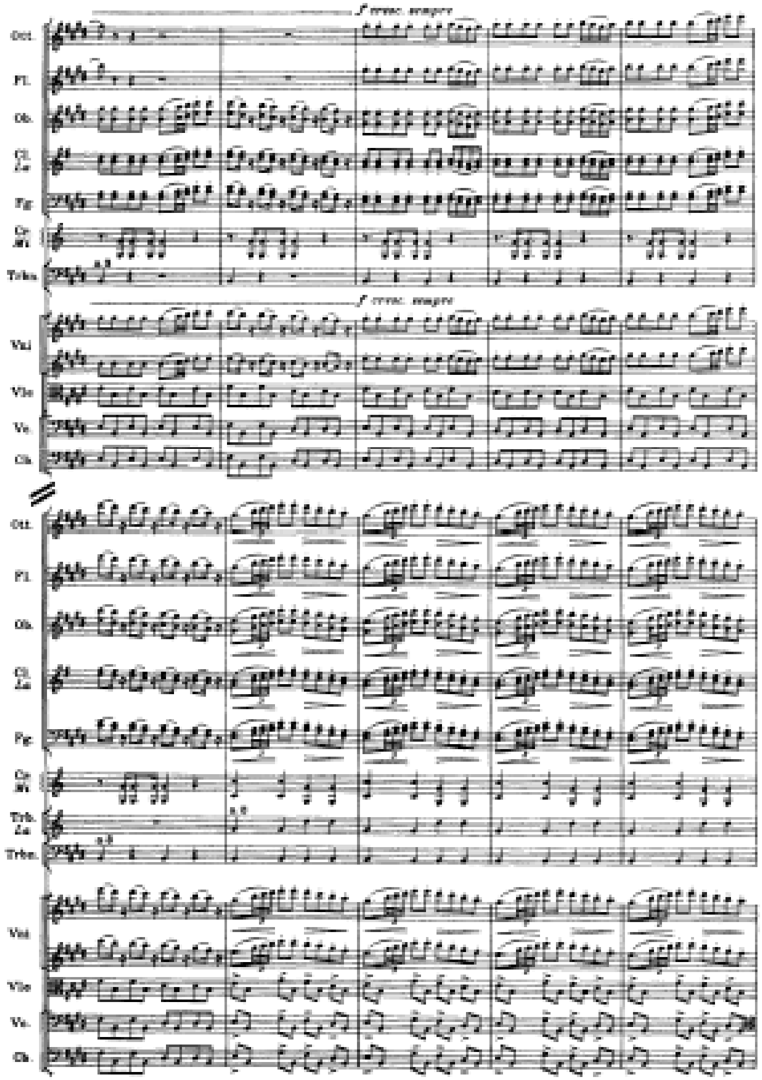


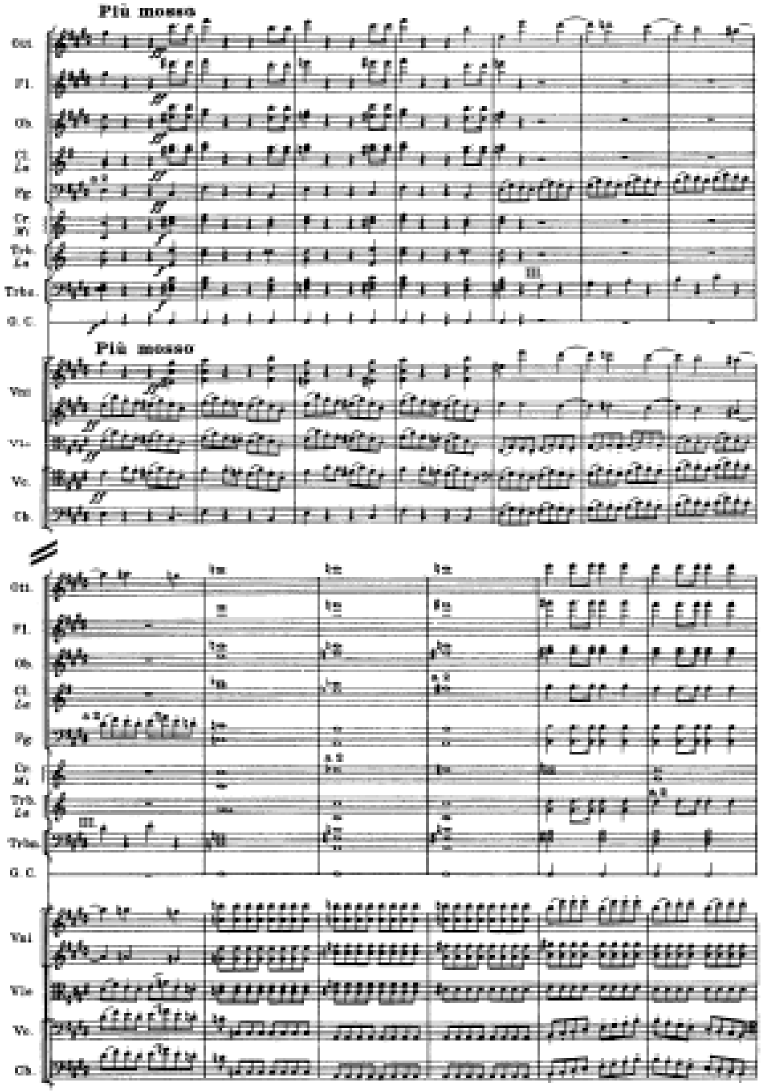
ROSSINI, *BARBIERE*: OVERTURE [3/5]



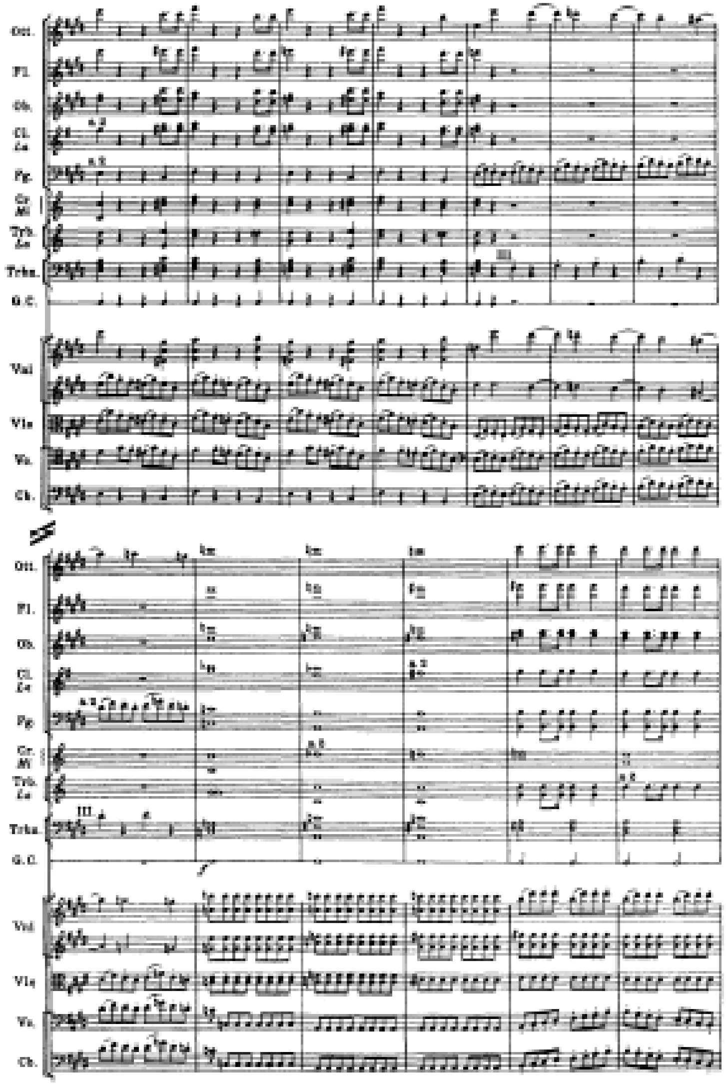


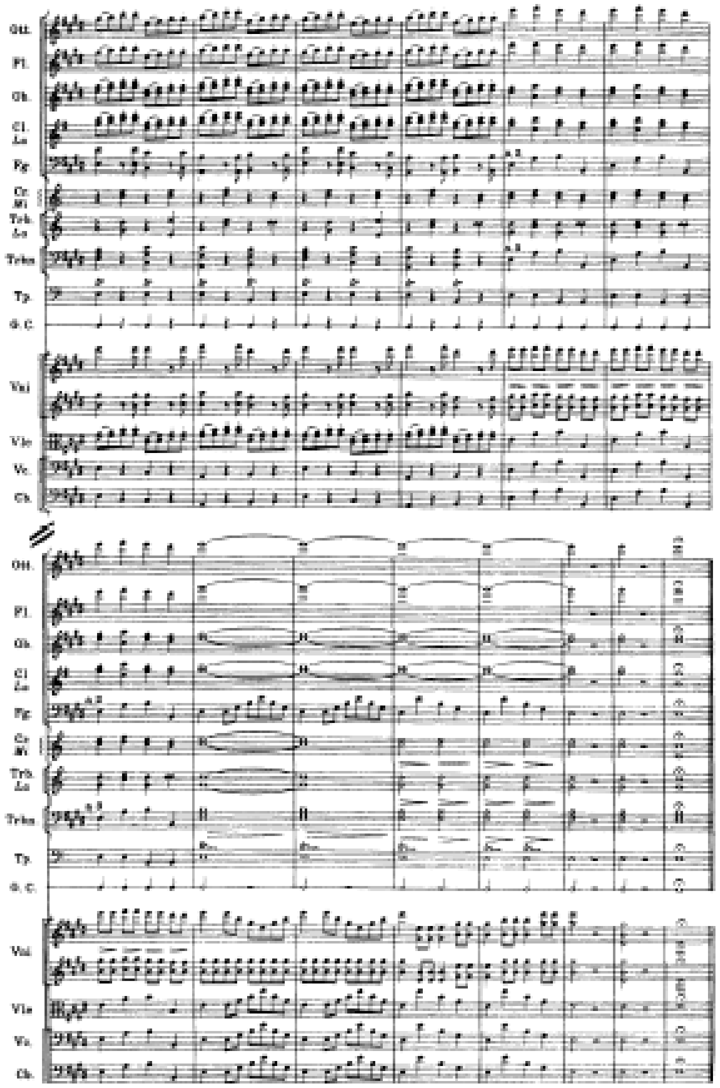
ROSSINI, *BARBIERE*: OVERTURE [4/5]



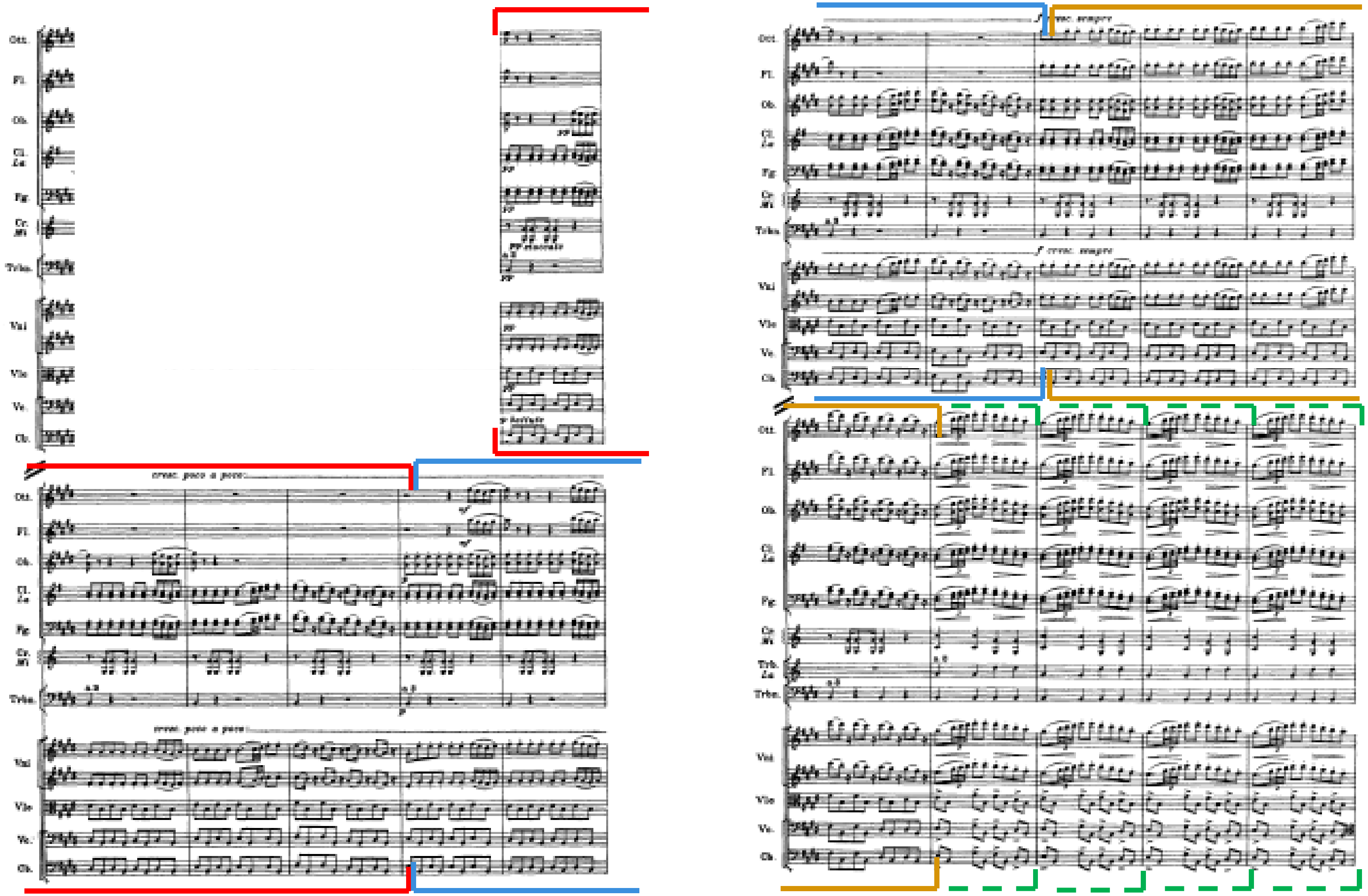


ROSSINI, *BARBIERE*: OVERTURE [5/5]



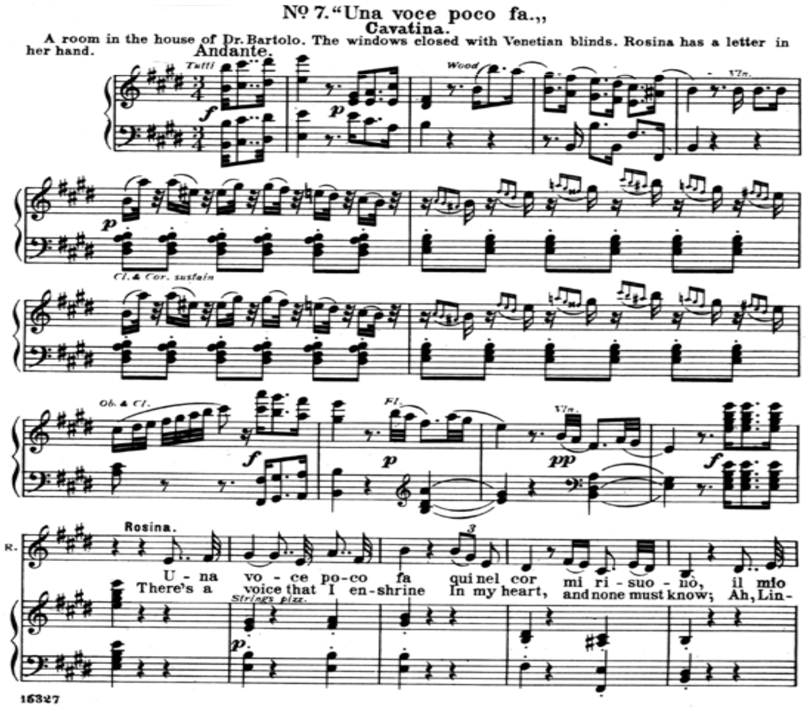


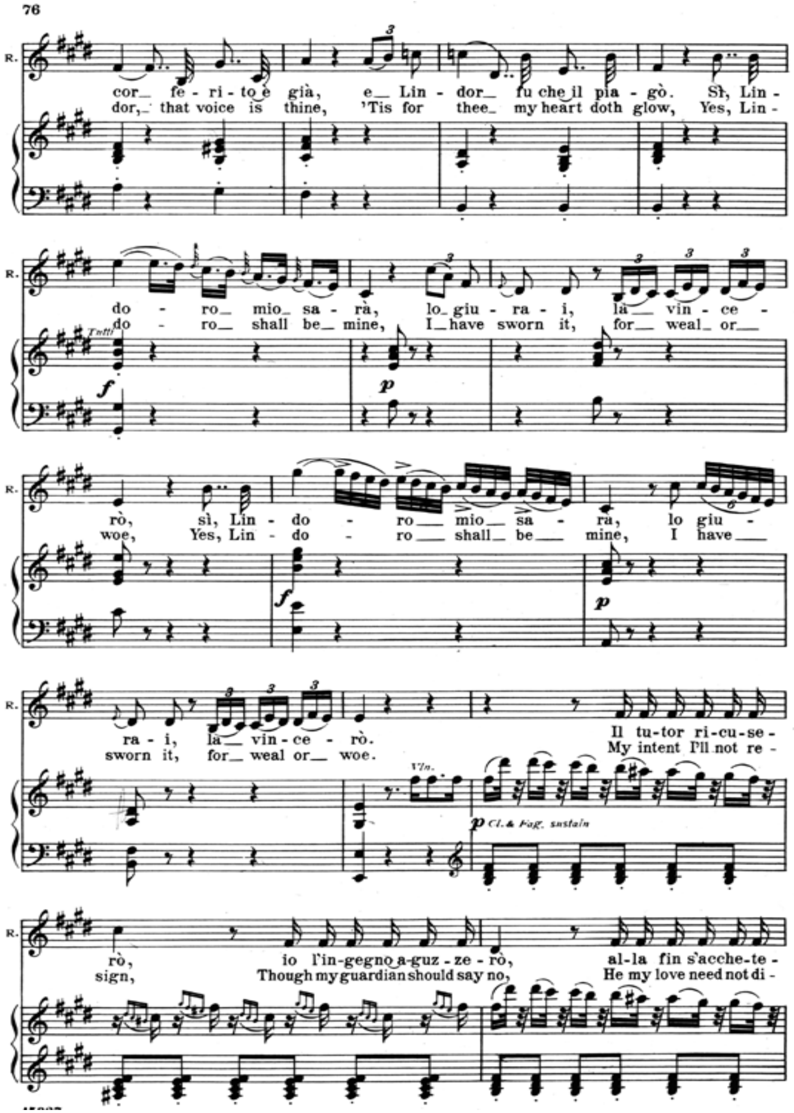
THE ROSSINI CRESCENDO



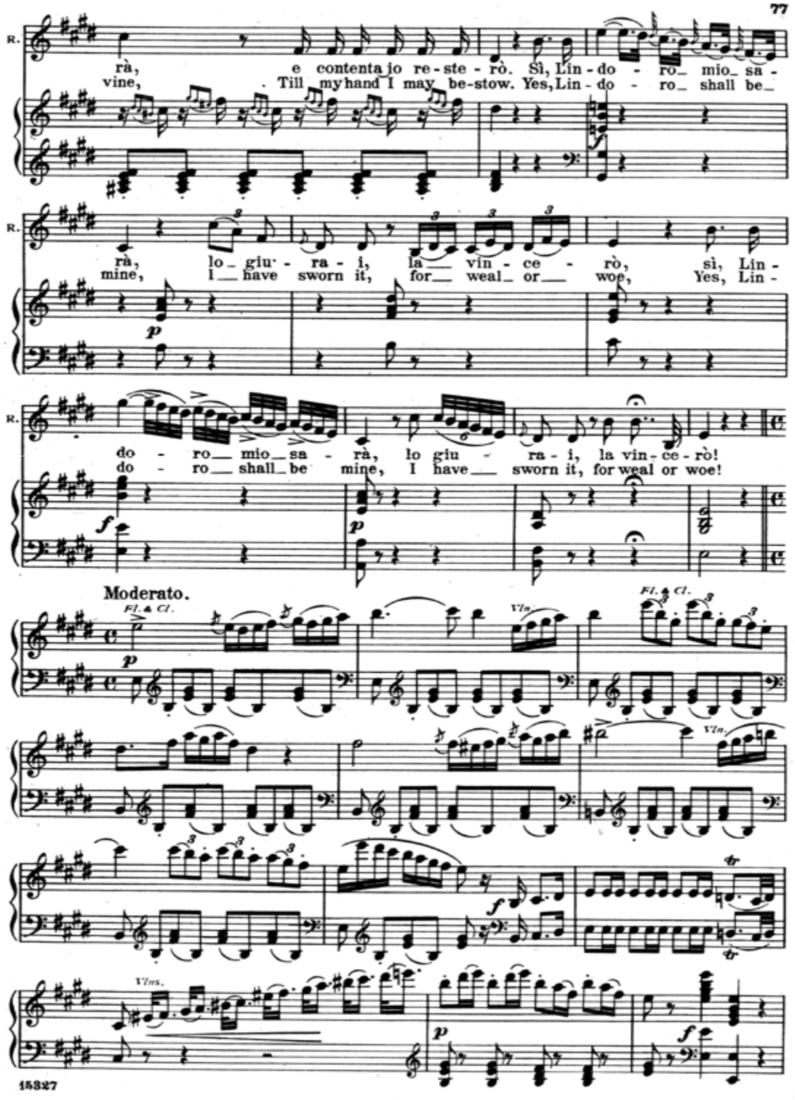
Green: Condensed version of bars 3-4 of pattern phrase (liquidation)

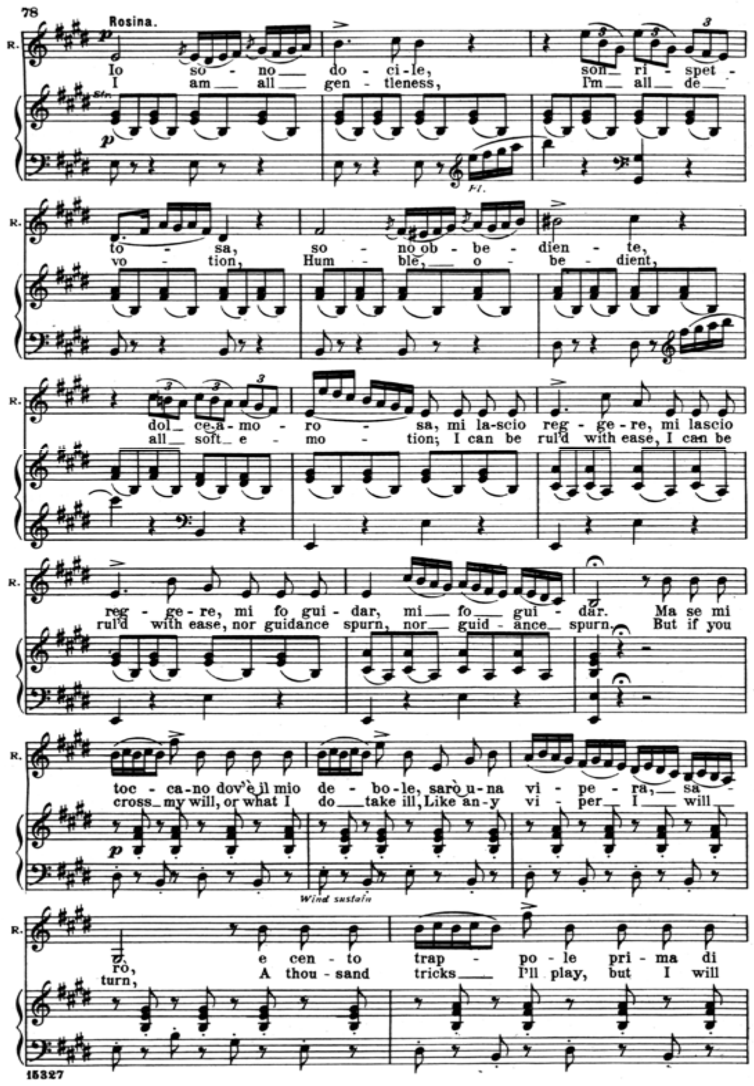
ROSSINI, 'UNA VOCE POCO FA'





ROSSINI, ‘UNA VOCE POCO FA’





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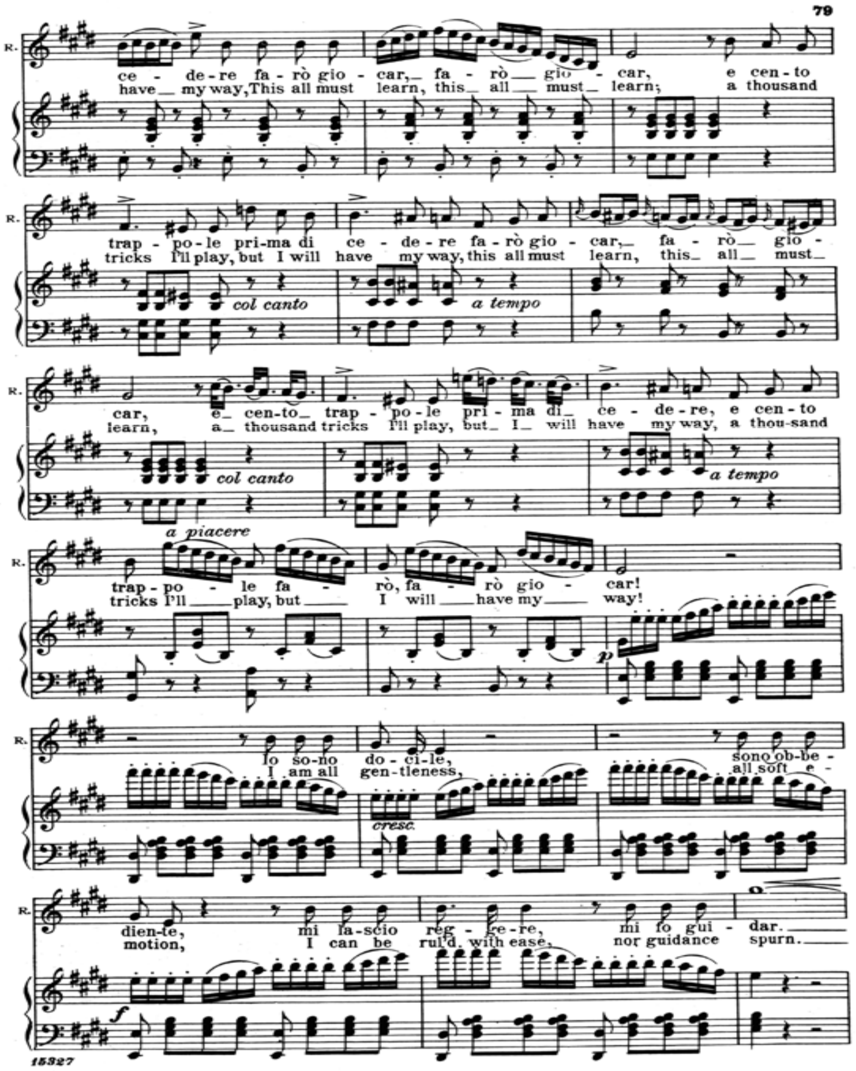
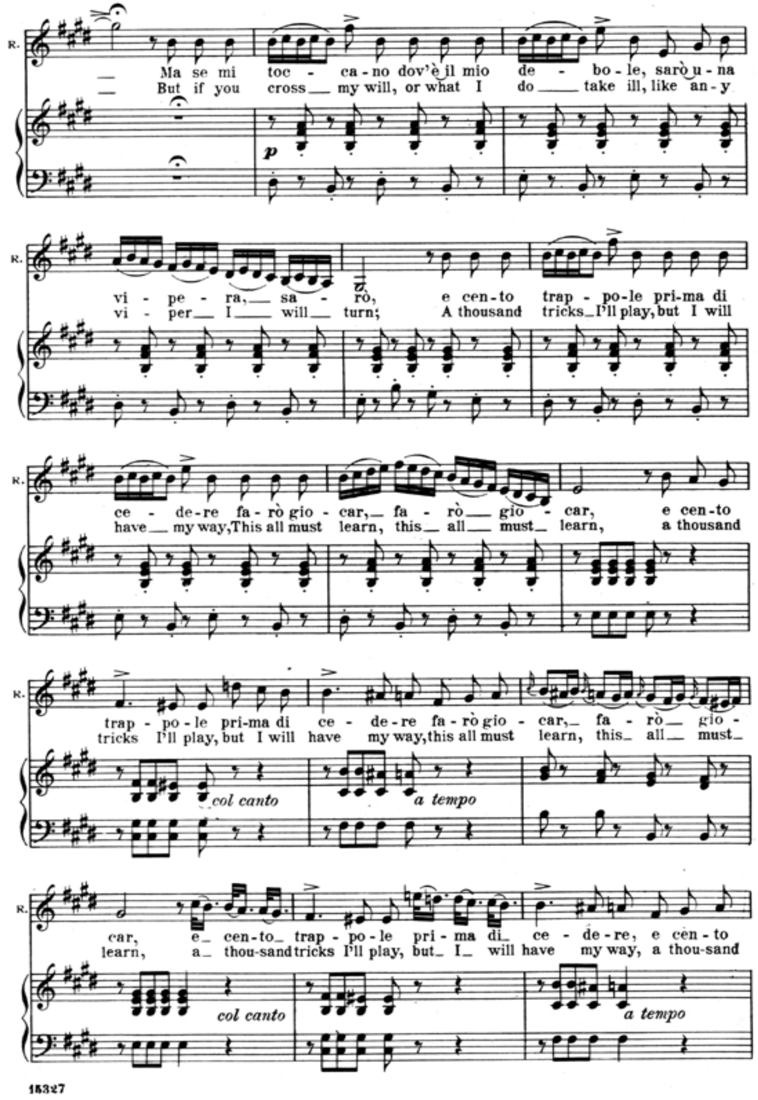
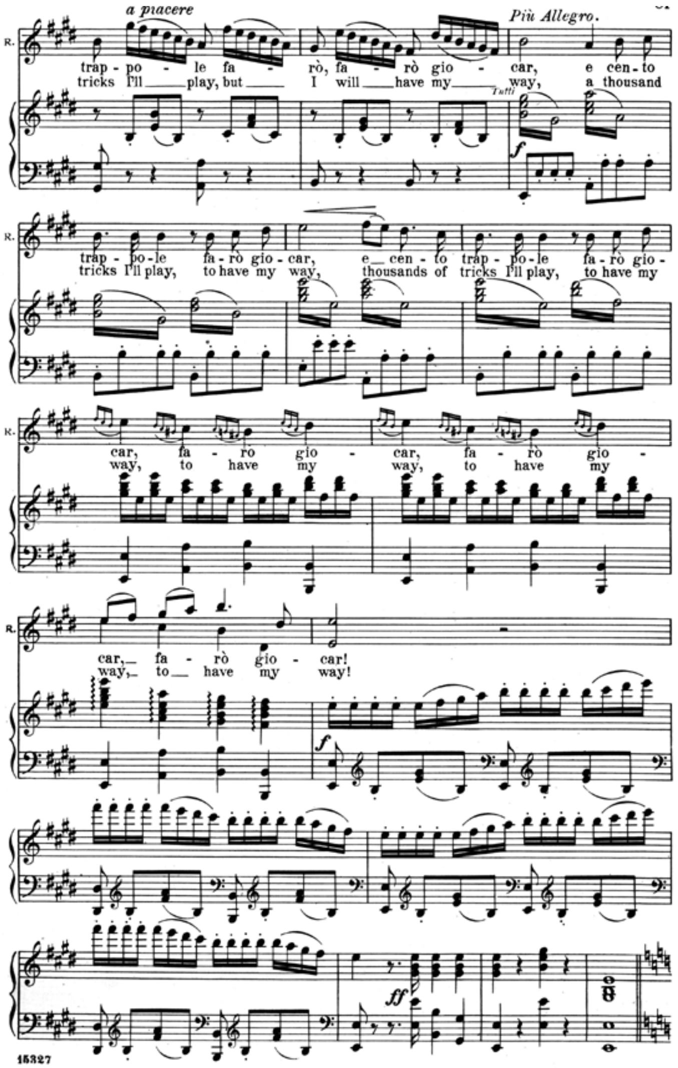
ROSSINI, ‘UNA VOCE POCO FA’





ROSSINI, ‘UNA VOCE POCO FA’



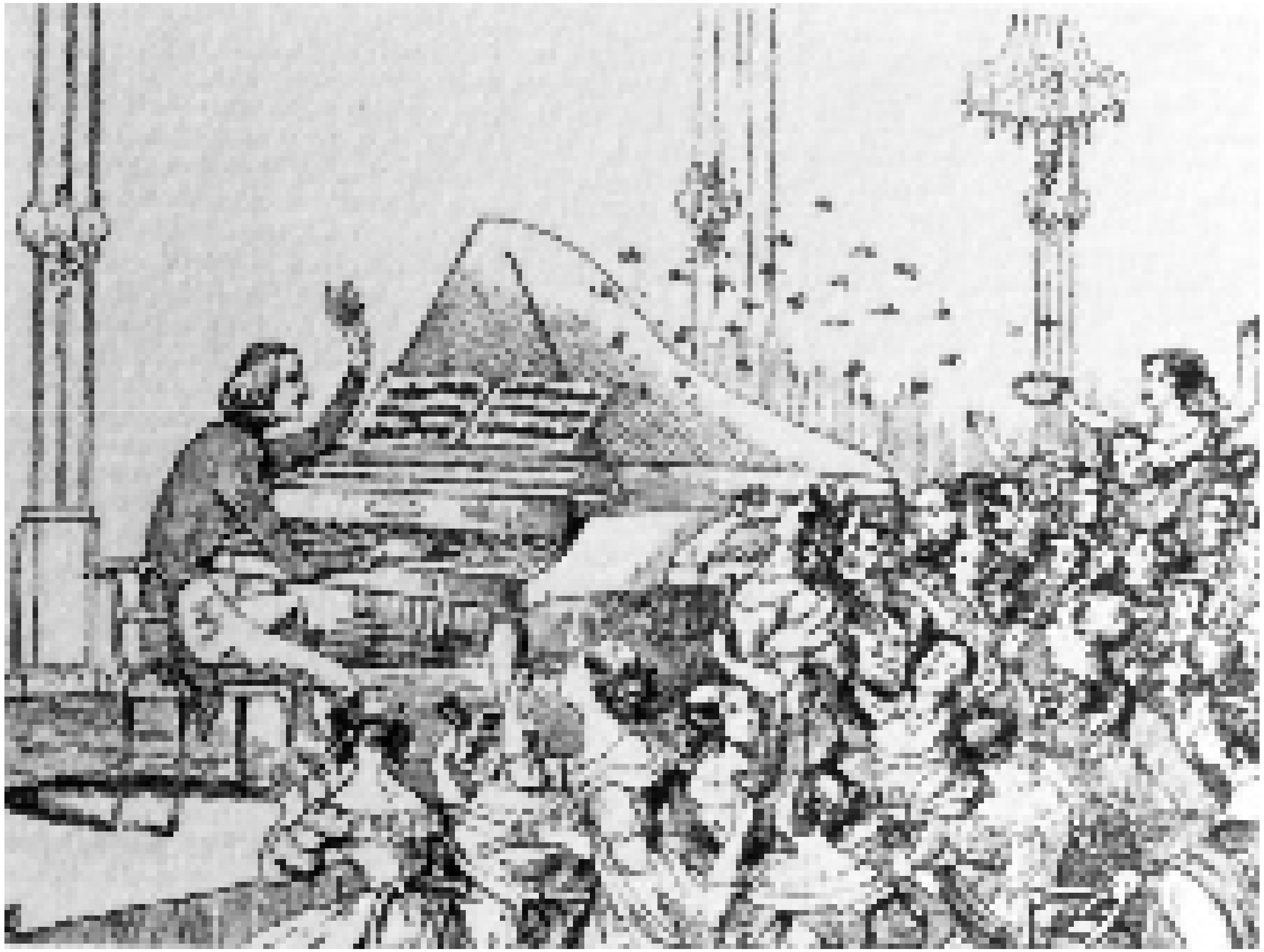
Rossini (1865)

STENDHAL ON VOCAL IMPROVISATION

The revolution inaugurated by Rossini has killed the gift of *originality* in the singer. [...] The average modern composer makes no greater demands in his score than can be fulfilled by the exercise of a moderate degree of technical competence in a specially *material* field: the field, in fact, of the *instrumentalist*. Rossini’s attitude of *lasciatemi fare* (leave everything to me) which is typical of his relations with his interpreters, has now reached such a pitch, that the latter may not even dispose of the right to improvise on the last note of all; in almost every instance, Rossini will be found to have supplied his own embroidery. (353)

Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, translated by Richard Coe (London: Calder, 1985)

‘THE SERVANT OF THE PUBLIC’



Caricature of Liszt, c. 1840

INSTRUMENTAL IMPROVISATION

Roger Daltrey

Paul Nicholas

Stills from *Lisztomania* (1975, dir. Ken Russell)

Stage directions

A fearsome forest gorge, thickly wooded with dark trees and encircled by high mountains. On one side a waterfall plunges down. A full moon shines with a sickly light. Two thunderstorms are approaching from opposite directions. Slightly off to one side stands a blasted oak, so dead that its rotten core gives off a ghostly light. On the other side an owl with rings of fire around its eyes squats on the gnarled branch of a tree. Ravens and other birds of the forest sit in the other trees around.

'The forest ravine'', lithograph by Adam and Hostein reproduced by Heinrich Ramberg

WEBER, *DER FREISCHÜTZ*, ACT II (CASTING)

- Incantation by Caspar
- Bullet 1: Sinister forest birds
- Bullet 2: Appearance of black boar
- Bullet 3: Rising storm
- Bullet 4: Cracking of whips, horses
- Bullet 5: Ghostly hunt sings
- Bullet 6: Full-on storm
- Bullet 7: Samiel (devil) appears

‘The diabolical hunt’, lithograph by Adam and Hostein reproduced by Heinrich Ramberg

FANTASTICAL ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

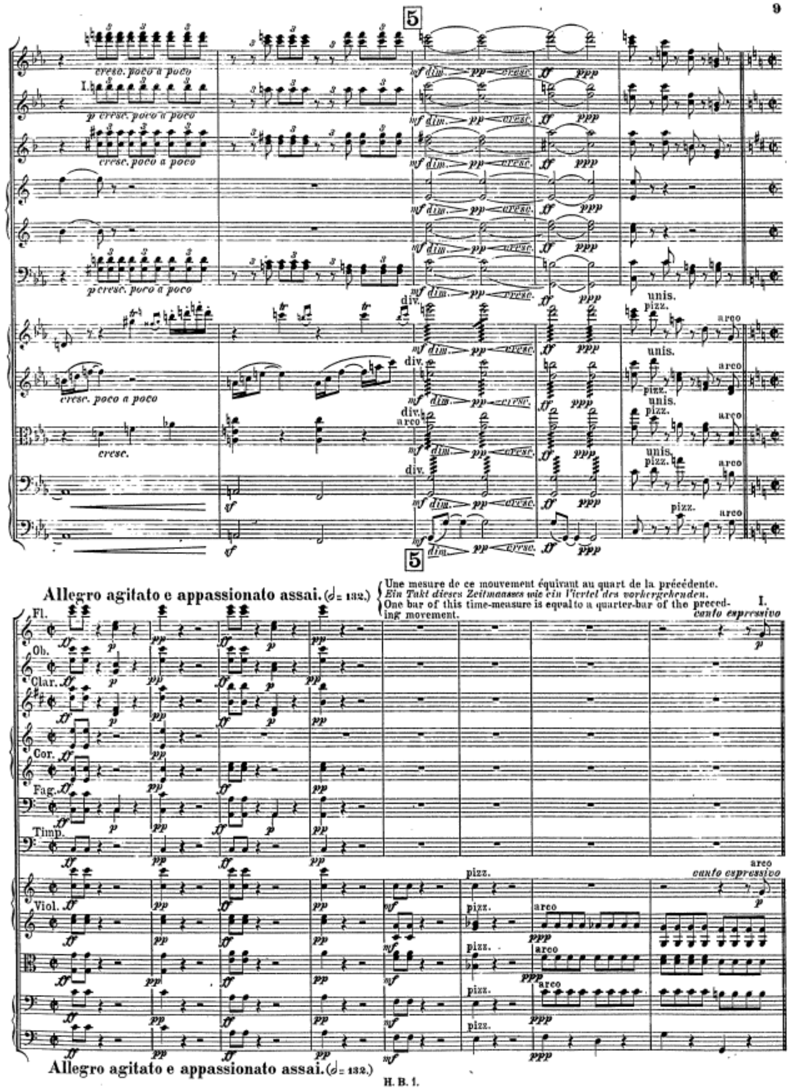
- Berlioz wrote his *Symphonie Fantastique* in 1830, partly inspired by an unrequited passion for Irish actress, Harriet Smithson, whom he saw performing Shakespeare. Revised 1831-2 when in Italy, published 1845
- The work taps into many aspects of the *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the age): the power of memory and fantasy, the fascination with the uncanny and the Gothic, and with madness and monomania
- Much of the music was adapted from Berlioz's existing works: e.g. the 4th movement was originally a 'March of the Guards' from the opera *Les francs juges* (1826, rev. 1829)

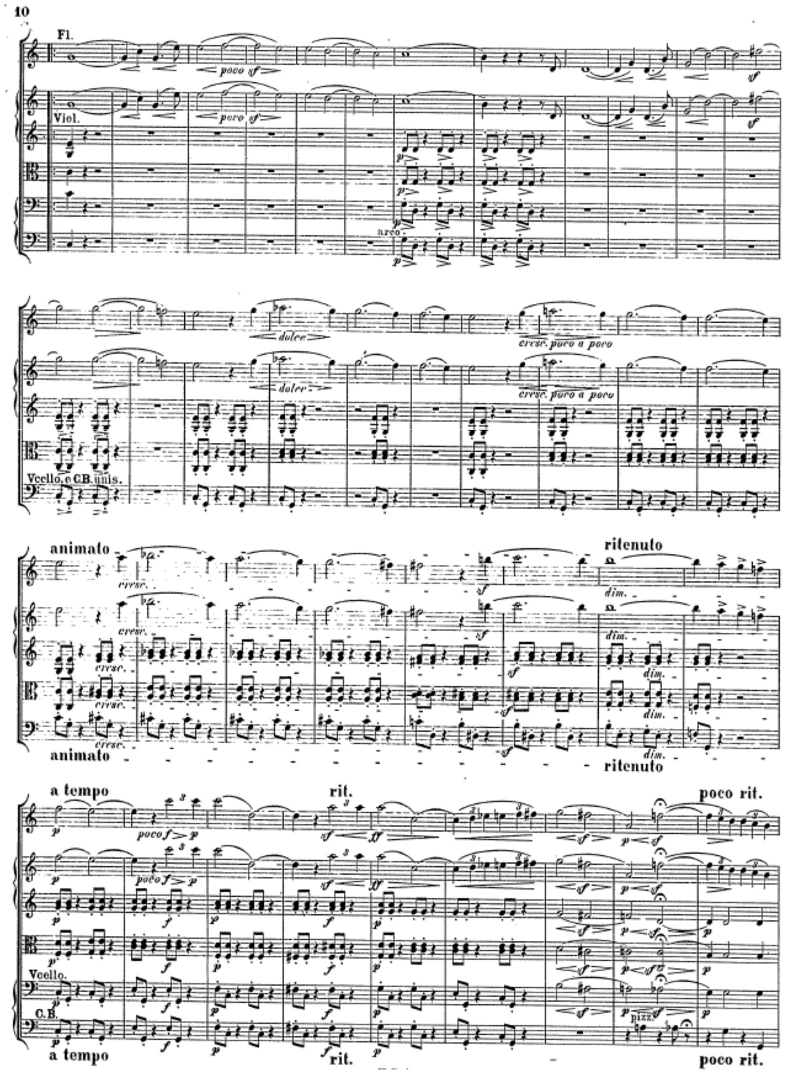
'Berlioz', by Emile Signol, (1832)

THE PROGRAMME AND ITS INCARNATIONS

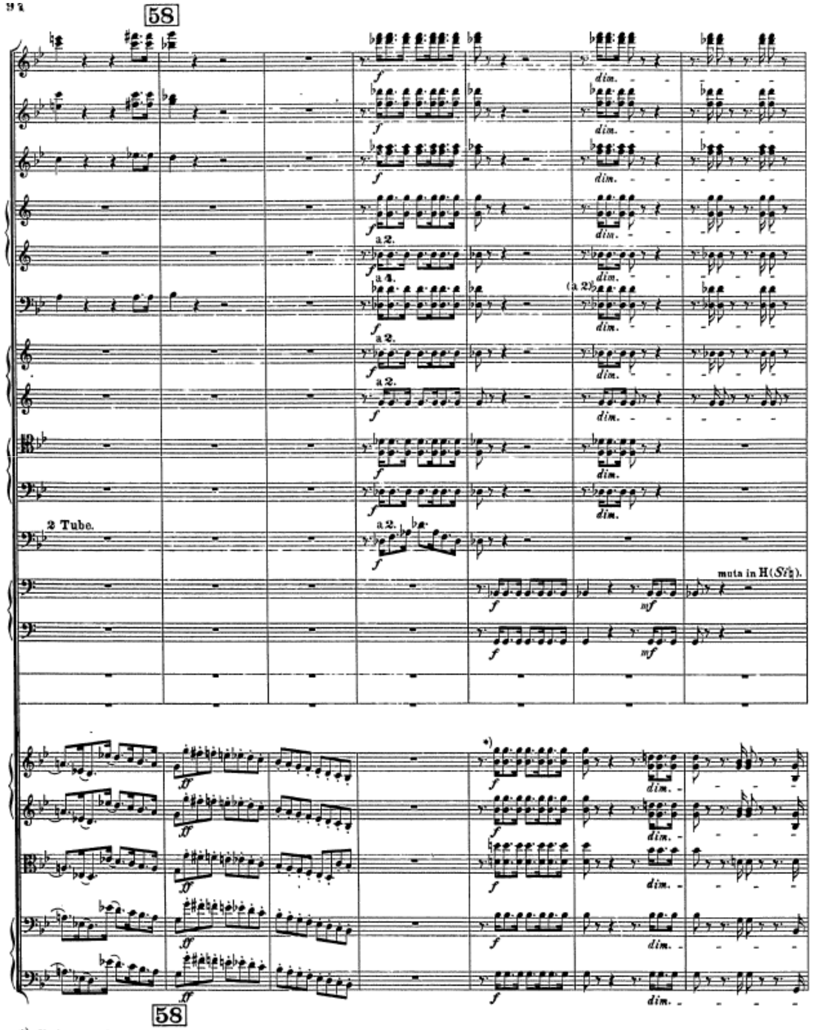
- The programme went through several versions, and Berlioz seemingly changed his mind on its importance
- 1830: ‘At concerts in which this symphony is played, the distribution of this Programme to the audience is indispensable to the full understanding of the dramatic plan of the work’
- 1855: ‘If the symphony alone is performed in a concert [...] if necessary, one can even dispense with distributing the programme, keeping only the titles of the five movements. The symphony by itself (the author hopes) can afford musical interest independent of any dramatic purpose’
- I Day-Dreams, Passions
- II A Ball
- III In the Meadows
- IV March to the Scaffold
- V Sabbath Night’s Dream

SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE I





SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE IV end [1/2]

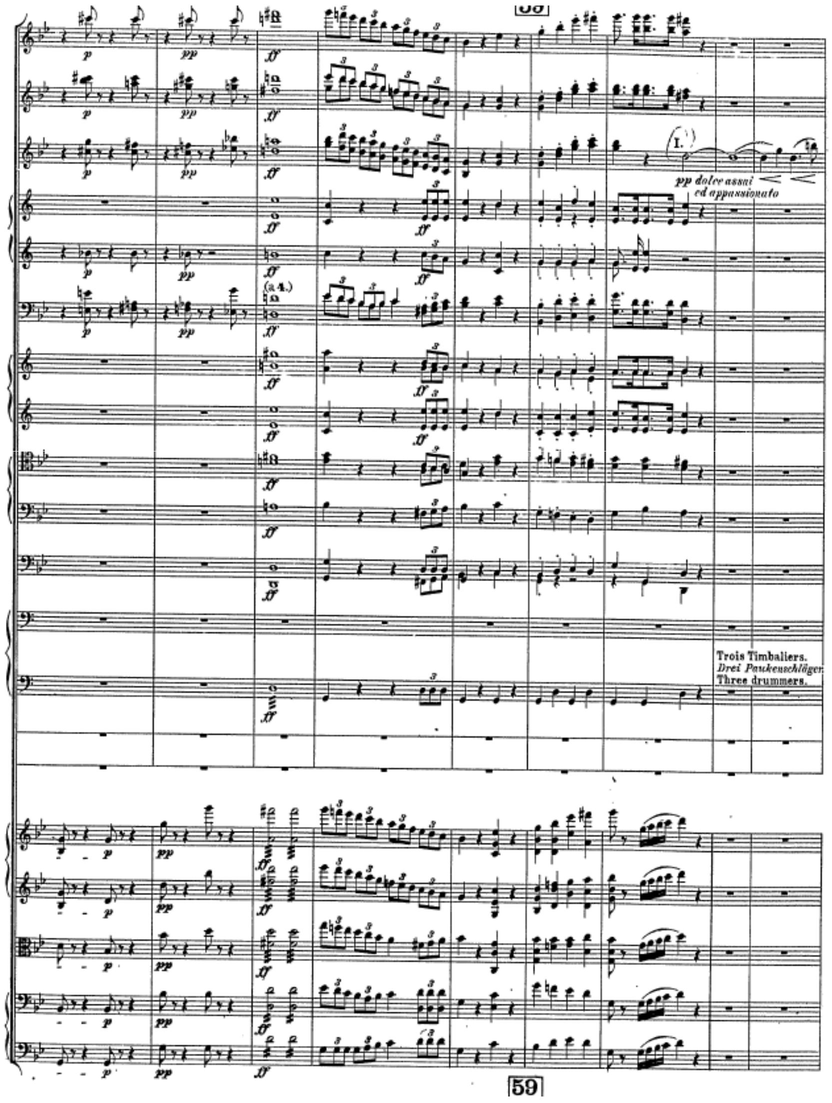


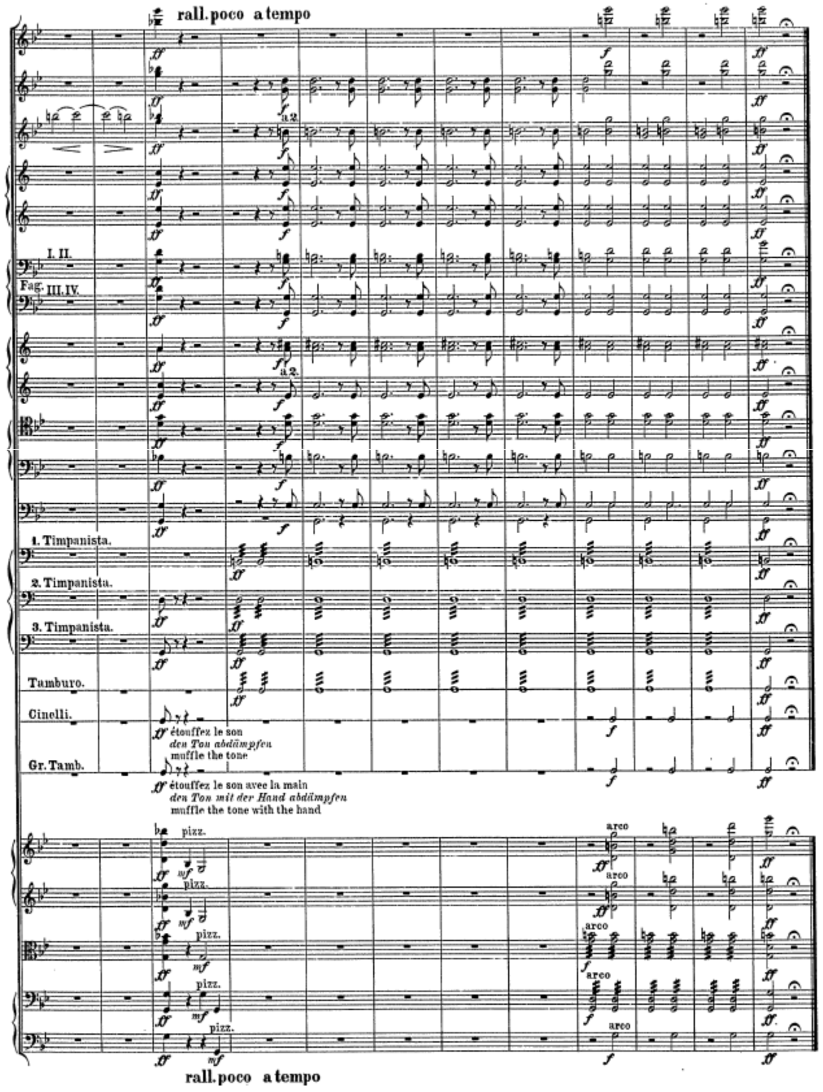
*) Il n'y a pas de faute de copie ici; c'est bien l'accord de Sol naturel mineur qui froisse de très près l'accord de Ré bémol majeur; l'auteur recommande aux Violons et Altos de ne pas «corriger» leurs parties en mettant des ♭ aux Ré, quintes de l'accord de Sol. (Note de H. Berlioz.)

Hier ist kein Schreibfehler; der G moll-Akkord steht unmittelbar neben dem Des dur-Akkord. Der Componist ersucht die Violinisten und Bratschisten, ihre Stimmen nicht durch Vorsetzen eines ♭ zum D, der Quinte des G moll-Akkordes, zu „corrigiren".

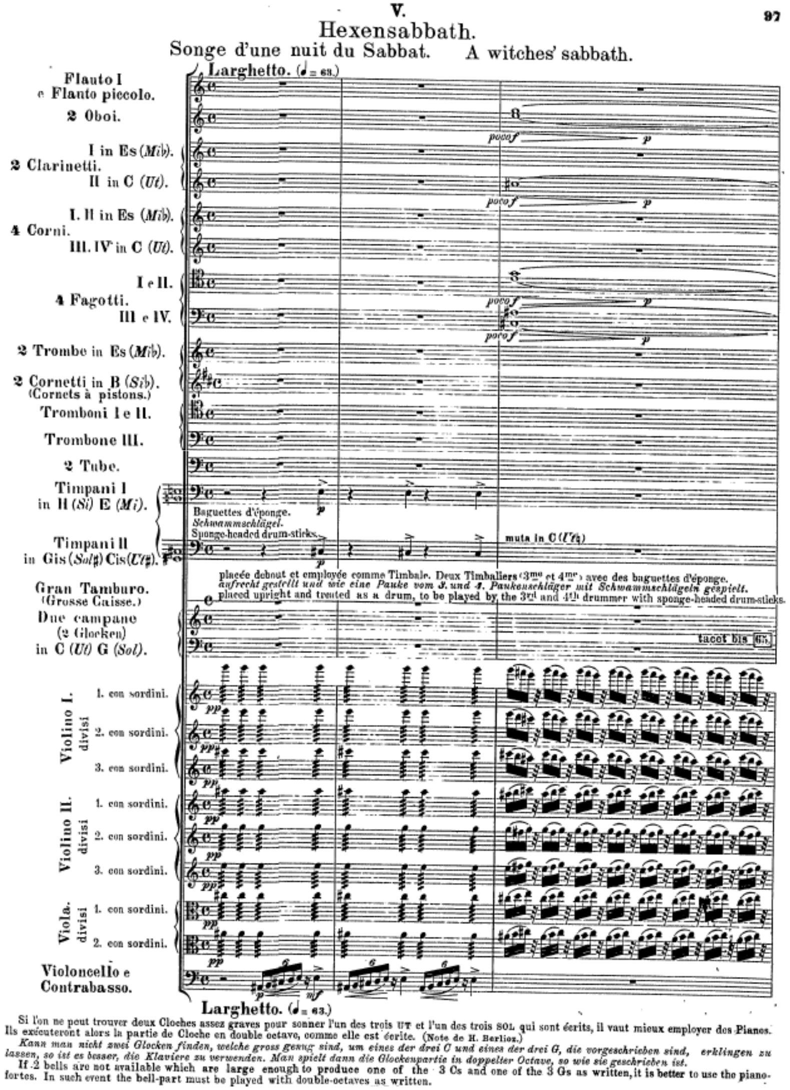
This is no clerical error; the G-minor-chord is immediately neat to the D-flat-major chord. The composer requests the violinists and violaplayers not to "correct" their parts by placing a ♭ before the D of the fifth of the G-minor-chord.

SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE IV end [2/2]





THE DIABOLICAL FANTASTIC



Movement 5: 'Sabbath's Night Dream' (opening)

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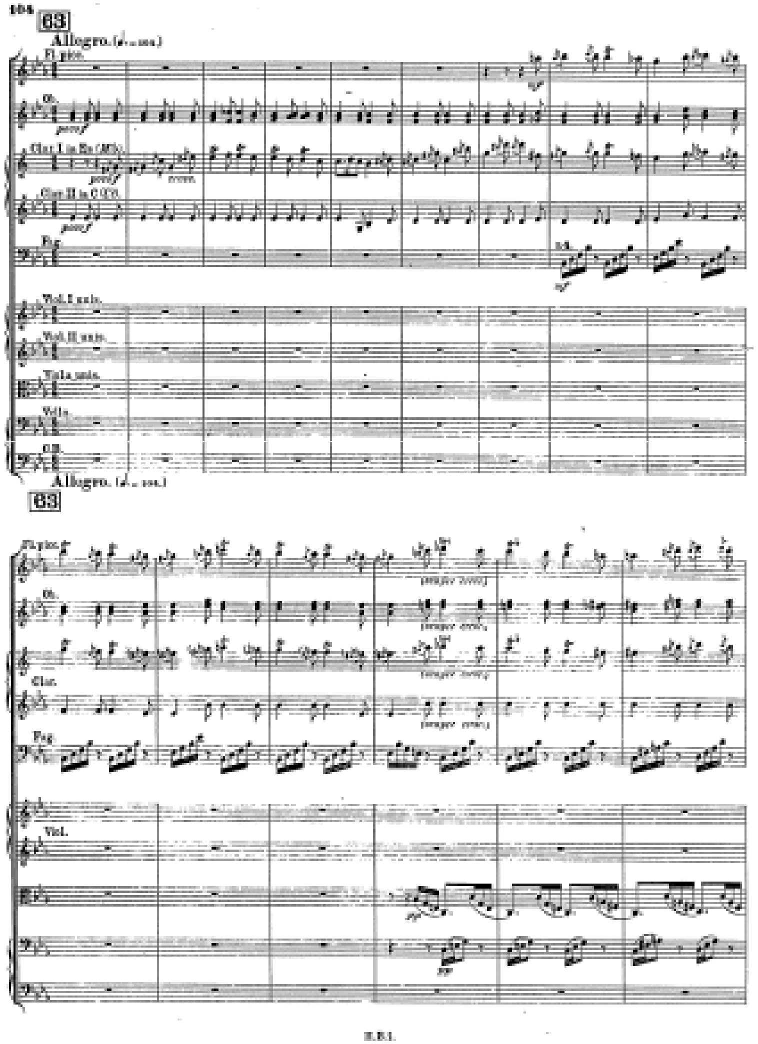
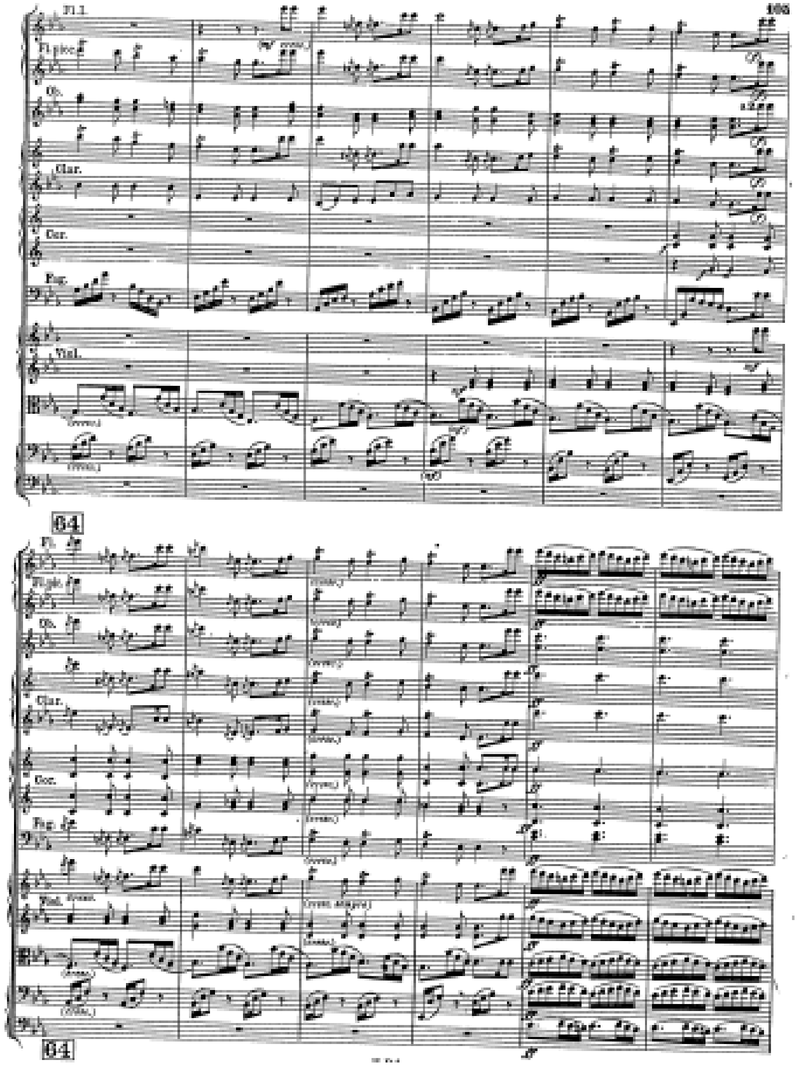
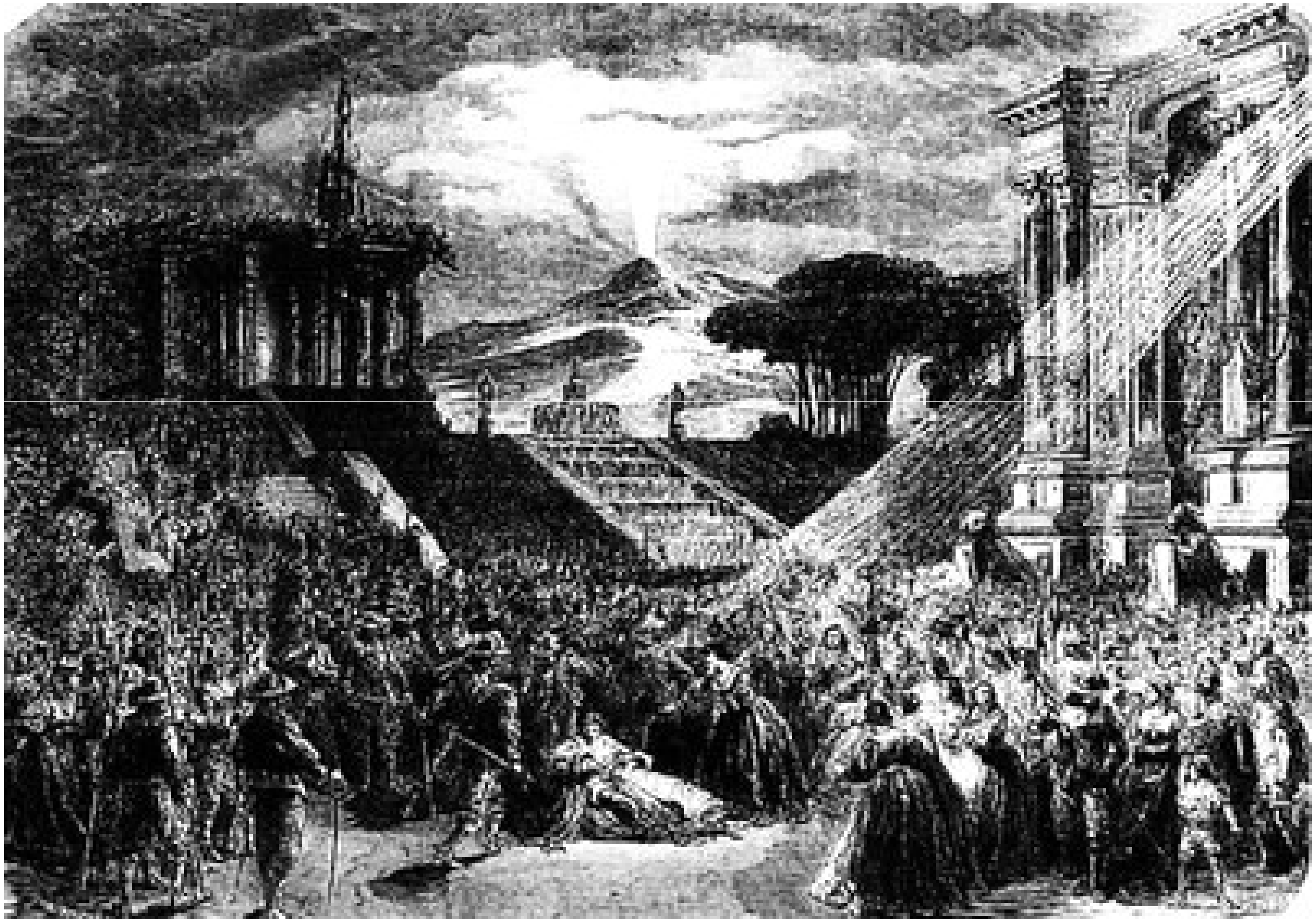
‘GROTESQUE’ IDEE FIXE





AUBER, *LA MUETTE DE PORTICI* (1828)

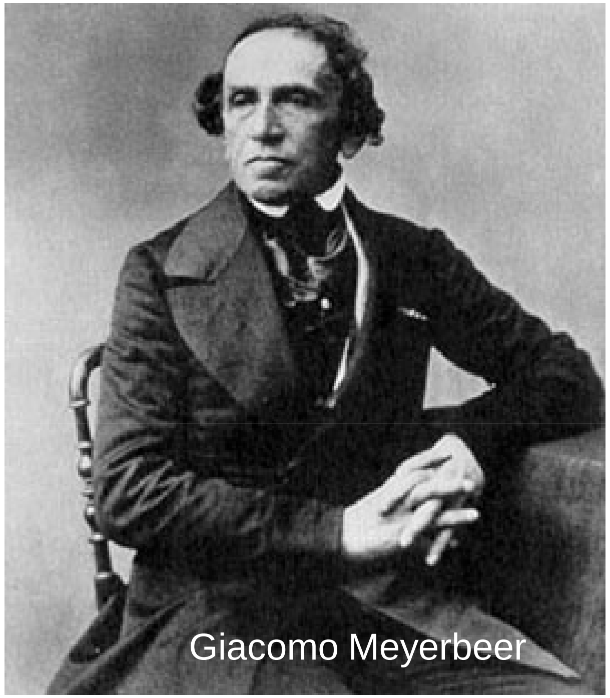


Final scene, with Vesuvius erupting

This work is generally regarded as the first *grand opéra*

MEYERBEER, *LES HUGUENOTS* (1836)

'The Massacre of St Bartholomew's Day' — a drawing of the 1858 production of 'Les Huguenots' at Her Majesty's Theatre



Giacomo Meyerbeer

Catholics

Valentine de Saint-Bris

Comte de Saint-Bris

Comte de Nevers

Queen Marguerite (sister of Charles IX)

Huguenots

Raoul de Nangis

Marcel (servant)

Plot concerns the historical massacre of the Hugenots by the Catholics on St. Bartholomew's Day 1574

LECTURE RECAP

- Beethoven vs Rossini: seen as embodying opposing tendencies of music in the early 19th century (summarised as work vs performance aesthetics)
- Virtuosity – emphasises the performative, the here-and-now; can be seen to be antithetical to the work concept
- The Rossini crescendo – repetitions of a phrase at ever increasing dynamic levels; another device that only comes alive in performance
- Liszt – combined technical virtuosity with a magnetic aura (irresistible to audiences, esp. ladies of the time)
- Demonic aura in contrast with idealised folk atmosphere at the heart of the attraction of Weber’s *Der Freischütz*
- Berlioz, in the *Symphonie Fantastique*, created a work which synthesises many of the currents of 19th-century romanticism
- *Grand opéra* (began c. 1828): the equivalent of cinema in its day – emphasis on spectacle, lavish forces, scenic special effects (as in Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots*)